Metropolitan Governance Policies

Concept Note

May 17, 2021

15:45-16:30 (Costa Rica)

Objective: The purpose of this LAV is to generate a discussion regarding the progress and successful stories of metropolitan governance in Latin America and the Caribbean in the context of the COVID-19 crisis. The problems will be analyzed from a gender perspective, considering those who reside informally within the cities' administrative borders, and towards building a more resilient metropolitan governance.

Organized by: Cities Alliance, ECLAC

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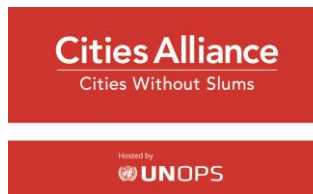
The context of the Metropolises in Latin America and the Caribbean in the framework of COVID-19

In 2021, Latin America and the Caribbean will continue to be one of the most urbanized regions in the world. 80% of the region's population lives in urban areas and the figure is expected to reach 86% by 2050 (UNDESA, 2019). In the region, there are 64 metropolitan areas with at least one million inhabitants, concentrating 36.50% of the population (CIPPEC, 2016). Their growth rates are above the national averages, but their governance fragmentation, and their lack of legal frameworks, impede the articulated development of inter-municipal urban services and infrastructures.

Metropolitan governance structures in LAC are complex and varied. This may be due to the size of the city, the interdependencies of urban centers, or the regulatory frameworks of public administration. Traditional boundaries have become obsolete. As cities have expanded beyond their administrative boundaries, ecosystems exceed jurisdictional boundaries, and risks ignore local competencies.

Metropolitan governance is based on the laying of communication networks between state actors at different levels and non-state actors, to make decisions about city planning. These agreements, achieved by various methodologies on a horizontal way, allow solving common problems, as well as agreeing on a way to grow in the future on the various scales of the territory.

The new models of metropolitan governance must ensure that urban development is a social and political commitment, in co-responsibility with civil society, and safeguarding ecosystems. Sustainable, multilevel governance must be guaranteed with effective social participation, with a focus on the social function of land and the key role of housing, especially for vulnerable populations with deficiencies or reduced access to urban infrastructure and services.

Still, there are a number of challenges inherent to the dynamics of metropolitan governance. The need to develop communication channels and agreements between entities of different scales (public, private sector, and civil society in general) necessarily entails the appearance of power asymmetries. Likewise, there are usually no institutional mechanisms for co-responsibility and collaboration, or institutionalized spaces for such agreements. The dynamics of metropolitan governance also requires going beyond the projectization of public policies in a sectoral manner to have a holistic approach to urban policies. This tends to complicate land planning and development, and requires a great improvement in the technical and political capacities of municipalities. It is essential to articulate horizontal information mechanisms, co-responsibility tools, technical and regulatory tools to reduce power

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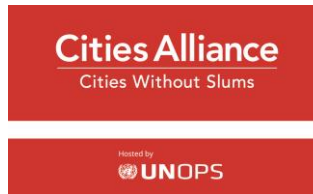
asymmetries and achieve metropolitan agreement. By themselves, those tools do not promote plurality, collaboration, and inclusion.

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the existing cracks within metropolitan governance have deepened. Health has become the focus of the metropolis, a problem accentuated by the different treatments it had on different sides of the inter-municipal borders. Women, the elderly, children, and diversity groups have suffered the negative effects of the pandemic with marked inequality. In this context, it is necessary to promote collective networks where the different government actors and civil society can serve in solidarity those who need it most and promote the construction of local resilience.

When considering the multidimensional effects related to the pandemic, it is essential to empower local governments; scale resilience at the city and community level. Under the principle of "*build back better*", the recovery of cities should be focused on multi-risk, multi-sector and multi-stakeholder initiatives that consider the unique complexities of urban systems and the economies of each city. The decarbonization and circularity of the economy should be supported, focusing on overcoming inequalities and providing support to the most vulnerable groups.

Metropolitan areas concentrate a large part of the jobs, and in cases where economic activities are not very diverse, the impacts of the pandemic can be even more severe. Given this, it is critical that cities are able to adequately evaluate the areas of action to focus on the recovery of the territory, considering the competences at the local government level and the current policies of the authorities, prioritizing those initiatives with the greatest potential for implementation. For example, in the case of the Municipality of Lima, a potential to support and promote MSMEs has been identified; while Guayaquil focuses its recovery on promoting sustainable housing; Santo Domingo, for its part, is committed to establishing clear protocols for metropolitan resilience to reinforce its governance system.

Characteristics of Metropolitan governance in Latin America

Regulatory frameworks in countries such as Brazil and Colombia have made it possible to generate mechanisms in the process of guaranteeing democratic governance and participation. In the case of Mexico, current advances imply an soon-to-be recognition of metropolitan areas at the constitutional level. However, in many countries in the region this is not the case. Fragmentation in the governance of metropolitan areas has been critical during the handling of the pandemic. Although metropolitan governance mechanisms are wide and varied, they are usually dependent on local circumstances. The change in the governance model is usually accompanied by a restructuring of the dialogue between entities. The pyramidal model of decision-making must be replaced by a horizontal communication matrix to reach agreements between the parties.

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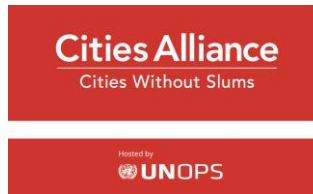
In this context of evolution and consolidation of regulatory frameworks for metropolises in Brazil and Colombia, it is important to note that their existence is not synonymous with optimal functioning and areas of opportunity and some challenges to be taken into account for their future evolution can be identified:

- Democratize and redistribute power between the different levels of government as well as with the inclusion of new actors in the instances of metropolitan governance.
- Strengthen local capacities and the development of coordination mechanisms in the regulatory, financial and fiscal fields, as well as in information systems.
- Generate a link between governance and land planning, in particular the application of land management instruments on the metropolitan scale.
- Develop flexible governance schemes and processes that adapt to the characteristics and specificities of metropolitan territories.

In this way, there is no linear and normative model and/or route moving towards metropolitan governance modes, since these depend on and are gradually built from the specificities of the territories and political actors (their conflicts, alliances and negotiations). In Latin America, metropolitan governance models have been developed through a variety of formal and informal arrangements, supra-municipal or inter-municipal agreements, and strategic, sectoral, and territorial planning projects.

## Key questions for the discussion

In structuring this LAV it is important to ask ourselves:

- What experiences of metropolitan governance have been successful in dealing with the COVID-19 crisis?
- How can we generate new communication channels and agreements to promote metropolitanism in an inclusive way and with a gender perspective?
- How can we meet the needs of those living on the administrative margins? Especially in the context of COVID-19.
- What paths are identified for a resilient metropolitan recovery?

LAV objective and format

Objective

Within the framework of the IV Latin American and Caribbean Forum on Housing and Habitat, and with a specific focus on actions to address COVID-19, Cities Alliance together with ECLAC are organizing this LAV with the aim of generating a discussion regarding the progress and successful stories in metropolitan governance in Latin America and the Caribbean in the context of COVID-19. The problems will be analyzed from a gender perspective, considering those who reside informally within the cities' administrative borders, and towards building a more resilient metropolitan governance.

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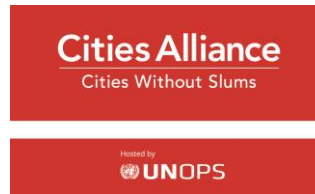
Based on these events and results, LAV's objective is to gradually establish a community of practice in the different Latin American and Caribbean regions. It is hoped to articulate knowledge, practices and stakeholders with global debates and agendas. Consequently, it is intended to generate momentum for the discussion of metropolitan governance mechanisms on a regional scale.
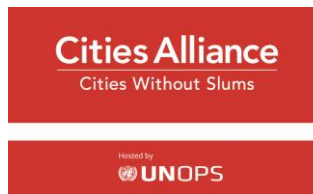
Panelists:

Xóchitl Gálvez - Commission of Metropolitan Zones and Mobility of the Senate of Mexico.

Diego Aulestia - ECLAC

Cid Blanco Jr - University of Lisbon

Gabriel Lanfranchi - Coordinator of the Environmental Urban Plan of Buenos Aires
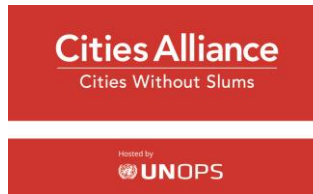
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Format

This global session will be hosted at the Latin American and Caribbean Housing and Habitat Forum, co-organized by Habitat for Humanity and the Urban Habitat and Housing Practice Platform, the UHPH, which will take place in May 2021.

The time assigned for the global session in the UHPH Forum is May 17 at 3:45 p.m. (Costa Rica).

Presentation	25'	interventions by: facilitator, voices of actors with their testimony on the process and beneficiary or protagonist of the requested topic. The objective with pre-recording is to minimize connection or technical risks, and ensure good time management and quality of interventions.	1). Introduction of the problem (eloquent facilitator, in short) 2 ' 2). Presentation of a sample of several (4) voices in a very inclusive way about their perspectives on the process. They can be an interview or question and answer with each actor (Short interviews) 20 ' 3) Presentation of impacts or achievements achieved and mainly reported by the beneficiary protagonist (it can also be through questions or a short interview) 3 '
Debate	30'	15 guests (prerecorded + guests) 15 VIP guests	4) 8 '- Moderator can open questions from participants in zoom 5) 8 '- Moderator can propose a round of interactions with participants in zoom, for example on practical recommendations or additional actionable 6) 8'- Moderator collects questions received from the general public through the chat of the Forum platform (SWAPCARD) or through FB and addressed to the protagonists
Networking			

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